



DHS Matters!

Michigan Department of Human Services • Lansing, Michigan • October 20, 2006

Produced by DHS Office of Communications, Suite 1510, Grand Tower, Lansing

Submit stories by e-mail to DHS-Newsletter@michigan.gov

Local artist donates paintings to Oceana DHS

From Nancy Sterk, Director
Oceana County DHS, Hart

SterkN@michigan.gov

Thanks to the generosity of a local artist, Oceana County DHS now highlights the contributions of local migrant farm workers on a daily basis.

Local artist Annette Toulemon donated two paintings from her "Gratitude Series" – that honors area crops and migrant farm workers – to Oceana County DHS, whose board accepted the paintings in a public ceremony Oct. 12. The paintings are displayed in our office in Hart.

DHS migrant affairs director Martha Cortes was among speakers at the ceremony. The DHS coordinates services to over 40,000 migrant agricultural farm workers and family members through workers housed in 20 counties.

"I wish to give these two paintings, 'The Morales Family' and the 'Canales Brothers,' to the Oceana County Department of Human Services to display in their lobby and conference room," Toulemon said.

"It gives me great pleasure to do so because I feel art belongs to everyone, not just to the one that creates it. Art should not remain in the artist's studio but whenever possible be where the public can see and enjoy it."

The "Gratitude Series," a group of 11 paintings depicting the labor of migrants farm workers, represents the artist's appreciation of local migrant workers. "Each day I marvel at their strength and willingness to do a hard task, at the same time balancing their every day lives of families and child rearing," she said.

Click to read...

Local office stories.....2-3

Your letters.....4



With donated art work (l-r): Martha Gonzales-Cortes, director, DHS Office of Migrant Affairs, Hart-based artist Annette Toulemon, and Nancy Sterk, director of Mason-Oceana DHS. Toulemon donated the two paintings for display in the local DHS office.

"My desire is that the migrant workers know we appreciate them and acknowledge their important contribution to society. I am honored that the Department of Human Services accepted these two paintings."

Toulemon is a native Californian who chose to retire to the place of her family home near Hart. She taught special education for many years in the Los Angeles County School system.

She lives with her husband and son and several pets in the country, which she loves. Her life is quiet yet busy, a distinct contrast to city life in southern California. Her other paintings may be seen locally in the Hart Area Public Library, the maternity ward at Muskegon's Hackley Hospital, the Episcopalian Church in Muskegon, and the La Fiesta Restaurant and the Oceana Center Grange in Hart.

Below from left: Colleen Ryan, Laurie Kupferer, and Sandi Martis. Colleen is Laurie's manager at Grand Traverse-Leelanau DHS; Sandi is a state employee that organizes blood drives in Traverse City. Laurie, a multi-gallon blood donor, won the third-quarter prize drawing in the State of Michigan Employee Blood Challenge.



Grand Traverse-Leelanau DHS employee wins in blood drive

From Michigan Community Blood Centers
www.miblood.org

GRAND RAPIDS – **Laurie Kupferer**, 53, of Lake Leelanau, won the third-quarter prize drawing in the State of Michigan Employee Blood Challenge, a year-long campaign to increase blood donation among state employees across Michigan.

Michigan Community Blood Centers presented Kupferer with her prize – a one-night getaway for two at Maple Ridge Resort on Lake Michigamme in the western Upper Peninsula – Oct. 16, at the State Building in Traverse City where Kupferer works as an eligibility specialist.

Kupferer is a regular blood donor whose donations to date total more than five gallons. Each gallon represents eight one-pint donations, with each pint of blood able to help three to four people. "It is such a simple thing to do and only takes an hour or so of your time," she said.

The **State of Michigan Employee Blood Challenge** is a cooperative effort of the state and three blood providers – American Red Cross, Upper Peninsula Regional Blood Center, and Michigan Community Blood Centers.

Gardener (and DHS client) comes by his green thumb naturally

Originally published by the Newberry (Mich.) News; used with permission

Jason VanDenBrink, a 30-year-old from Holland, has spent the last four years of his life living at a local adult foster care home. What makes the young man unique is his love for horticulture.

He has started a water garden on the deck of the home that is something to behold, featuring more than 50 different species of plants, many of them tropical, that he raised from seed or young plantings.

"He's an expert on plants," stated his caseworker, **Lori Miller**. "He's so knowledgeable and spends a lot of his limited income on rare species and putting together flower gardens."

VanDenBrink has been interested in plants since he was 10 years old. "I've raised orchids, ginger and jasmine plus a broad range of tropical plants" said VanDenBrink. "They can stay outside in the summer but they go in my room during the winter."

VanDenBrink has built a small pond with a splashing fountain and three species of goldfish as the cornerstone of his water garden. Also added to the mix are some tropical water lilies, hyacinth, shell plants and floating plants that help keep the water clear.

Although VanDenBrink has worked in the horticulture business while living in Holland he admits that, here in the Upper Peninsula, the kind of work he's interested in just is not feasible. For the time being he is a cook at a local restaurant.



Jason VanDenBrink, a gardener and AFC resident in Luce County, is also a DHS client in the U.P. He worked up the garden behind him at the AFC home where he resides.

■ **Lori Miller** is a services specialist with Luce County DHS. **Jennifer Storey**, community resource coordinator for Luce-Schoolcraft DHS, submitted this story for publication.

Genesee County's 8th annual foster care picnic

From Mary Smith

Genesee County DHS Children's District, Flint

SmithM33@michigan.gov

The Genesee County Children's District held our eighth annual Foster Care Picnic Aug. 21 at Ballenger Park in Flint. This year's picnic was attended by more than 400 foster children, foster parents and children services staff. It was a great success.

The foster care & protective services staffs organized this event, which is supported by donations from the foster care and CPS staff members, Child Advocacy Team, Family to Family funds, foster care recruitment funds and our county director.

The annual picnic is meant to provide a positive and fun event that allows the children to have fun and just "be a kid." The picnic also allows the foster parents to relax and take a break on our dime.

Everyone enjoyed hot dogs, hamburgers, chips, juice, salad, sno-cones and other desserts. This year we were able to have a bounce house, obstacle course, face painting, horseback riding, a clown who made balloon animals, and the Flint Fire Department brought the smoke house for children to learn fire safety.

The picnic organizers thank our county director, **Sheryl Thompson**, and our acting district manager, **Debora Buchanan**, for allowing us to have such an event. Thank you for allowing us to restore hope and joy into the lives of the children who turn to us for protection.

We also thank the following for volunteering at the picnic: **Jill Griffin, Olga Strahan, Jackie Strahan, Teresa Sherwood, Melissa Best, Rozelle White, Earl Bailey, Kim Reese, Jennifer Hartzell, Felicia Beadle, Terri June, Julie Terry, Sabrina McGowan, Amanda Herrick, Florida Dyson, Jamie Baxter, Miriam Taylor-Mysliwski, Kim Kerns, Michelle Bauserman, Michael McEwen, Tracey Thompson, Tania Otero, Bobbie Hodge,**

continues next page

Session helps older foster kids prepare for adulthood

From Julie Wiles, Family to Family Coordinator

Barry-Eaton DHS, Charlotte

WilesJ@michigan.gov

Eaton and Barry counties arranged independent living training for their foster children who were age 16 or older as part of the local Family to Family initiative. This initiative was set up to help prepare our youths for aging out of foster care. These were the topics presented to the youths to help them

make the big transition from foster care to adulthood:

- Finding my own place.
- Finding a compatible roommate.
- Budgeting to make money stretch.
- Using banks and credit.
- Protecting your money and your future.
- Starting out supplies.

The instructor was Denise Dunn, executive director of Eaton Housing Services located in Charlotte.

Denise has been the HSEC director since 1999. Denise can be reached at (517) 541-1180; she is very willing to share her training material.

Twelve youths attended training in Eaton County and 10 attended the Barry County training. This training meets licensing requirements for independent living services for our foster youths.

The feedback from foster parents was very positive. Some of the foster parents and residential staff participated in the training. One 17-year-old was overheard telling his foster mother that he needed to open up his own savings account and start establishing credit. He wanted to have his own home some day. Foster parents are already calling to see if this program will be offered again next summer.

During the session, Family to Family staff filled out the paperwork for Youth In Transition funding for qualifying foster children. Community resource coordinator Keith Behm set up the transportation for youths with volunteer drivers. The project used donated funds to purchase \$20 Walmart gift cards for the youths. These funds were obtained with a grant from Capital Area Community Foundation specifically to assist youths aging out of foster care. We are planning on scheduling this training on a yearly basis.



Trainer Denise Dunn, executive director of Charlotte-based Eaton Housing Services, proffers training for foster youths on housing, life skills, money management and more. She was engaged by Barry-Eaton DHS to help foster children on the verge of aging out of the system

Genesee County's 8th annual foster care picnic *continues from page 3*

Yvonne Thompson-Seales, Melissa Oginsky, Denelle Henry, Joe Policarpio, Antonice Bibbs, Dawn McComb, Jermaine Reese, Tekisha Scott, Robin McEachin, Michelle Peerboom, Shalonda Holmes, Kim Baxter-Brown, LaToya Carroll, Martha Hosmer-Arion, Sherri Miller, Khalilah Majied, Keiyauna Stanley-Shields, Dawn Frost, Barbara McLemore, Ana Lerma, Chrissy McNeil, Jamie Jones, Michelle Young, Bettie Hunter, Keywana Wright, James McGowan, Tamala Dickey, Kimberlee Lefear, Lisa Thomas, Damiekco Smith, Deondra Dennis, Kim Stribling and Karen Bunker.

The picnic would not have been such a success without all of the help of the volunteers.

Date: Sept. 26
To: Karen Golejewski, Manager
DHS Customer Service Unit, Lansing
Subj: Edith Smith

I had the occasion to deal with Edith Smith this morning on an issue for one of the residents of Greenwood Villa, a government assisted housing complex for seniors and disabled persons.

The particular case was complicated by unreturned phone calls from the client's worker, (the client's) newly- diagnosed cancer and treatment (that is) preventing her from being with me at the time of my phone call. Ms. Smith was able to assist me in an extremely professional and knowledgeable manner.

I am a service coordinator here, a HUD funded position, for the purpose of assisting our senior and disabled residents stay in an independent setting for as long as possible. Much of our time is spent assisting with DHS paperwork and other issues.

I just want to pass along to you what an excellent staff member you have in Ms. Smith. Thank you.

Mary Ann Thayer

Service Coordinator
Greenwood Villa
Westland

■ *Edith Smith is a member of the Customer Service Unit in Lansing that responds to inquiries from clients, legislators, service providers and others regarding DHS cases.*

Date: Aug. 18
To: Cindy Pushman, Director
Crawford-Otsego County DHS
Subj: Candee Foster

Candee Foster is our caseworker. We currently came into the office for a recertification of our case. I just want to say thank you for her continued support.


I had a good paying job and lost it because I had a pulmonary embolism about two years ago and my wife and I came into the office; Candee took us under her wing and walked us through the process. I am now going to school to be retrained and have now had another relapse. The hospital was telling us that we didn't have any insurance and Candee intervened to stop the collection calls from the hospital. We are just glad you could help and Candee is a saint.

We are also very pleased with the dentist that we are using. This one seems to be very compassionate. Once again, I would just like to say thank you for everything your agency has been able to help us with and especially all the help that Candee has given us.

Ralph Godmar

Johannesburg, Mich.

■ *Candee Foster is a family independence specialist with Otsego County DHS.*



Your letters,
intercepted
and otherwise

DHS Matters! is a product of Michigan's Department of Human Services
Marianne Udow, Director • Karen Stock, Director, Office of Communications
Larry VanDeSande, editor • Submit stories by e-mail to: DHS-Newsletter@michigan.gov